



WHAT'S MY NUMBER?

This is an easy one.

The American Academy of Dermatology recommends that everyone wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 30.

According to the American Academy of Dermatology, being in the sun too much can cause sunburn, freckles, skin texture changes, rashes and dilated blood vessels. Exposure also increases the risk of skin cancer and is the cause of 90% of wrinkles.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS

FREQUENCY OF APPLICATION

Here's how it works: If you are using a sunscreen with an SPF of 15, and it usually takes you 15 minutes to get a sunburn, all you have to do is multiply the two numbers together to figure out about how long your sunscreen should last. In this case, it would be 225 minutes, or 3 hours and 45 minutes.

While that seems easy enough, the formula doesn't necessarily hold true when you're dealing with SPF numbers that are higher than 30. And, unfortunately, there are numerous other factors -- including humidity, sweating and contact with water -- that can change that number by decreasing the overall effectiveness of sunscreen. So if you're planning on going swimming or doing any other sort of strenuous activity, you'll need to reapply often for your sunblock to be of much use.

CHEMICAL OR PHYSICAL?

Chemical sunscreens protect skin by absorbing the sun's rays and they do this by actually seeping deep within the skin. Some of the chemical sunscreen active ingredients have been shown to have endocrine disruption activity. Last up, most chemical sunscreens do not provide broad-spectrum protection against UVA and UVB.

Physical sunscreen utilizes zinc oxide and titanium dioxide as active ingredients. Physical sunscreens sit on top of skin and physically block the sun's rays, like a mirror. A great benefit is that they work immediately and do not seep into the skin. Zinc oxide is protective against UVA and UVB rays, unlike most chemical sunscreens.

CONCERNS FOR NANO-PARTICLES

Recently, nano-sized physical sunscreens have been developed which apply smoothly on the skin, but there could be concerns with this new technology. Nano-particles are basically very, very small particles of a particular substance and this could be problematic if nano-particles were to cross the skin barrier and get into the tissues of the body. The use of these ingredients is relatively new and long-term effects are unknown. Labeling is not required, so the only way to know for sure whether a particular mineral-based ingredient is nano-sized is to ask the manufacturer.

Whole Foods Market Premium Body Care prohibits chemical sunscreen active ingredients and are carefully screened for particle size. So even though these non-nano, physical sunscreens may apply with a slightly white film, you will be assured that these products do not contain chemical sunscreens or nano-particles.

IN ADDITION

In addition to applying sunscreen, wearing protective clothing and hats is helpful. Also, an adequate antioxidant and omega-3 fatty acid intake in the diet can also be protective to the skin. For post-sun soothing, nurture your skin by choosing products with nutrient-rich ingredients: Green Tea, Soy, Milk Thistle, Shea Butter, Sea Buckthorn & Carrot Oil.

Visit the Whole Body Department in your local Whole Foods Market store to get more expert tips and product suggestions.

